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ABSTRACT

The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative is a state- and city-funded program to help city residents expand their literacy and English language skills. In fiscal 1991-92, it provided services to 57,676 adult learners, including classes in basic education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and math and basic education taught in native languages other than English, study areas and tutoring services, technical assistance and support services, and a referral hotline. The program report for 1991-92 provides information on the following aspects of the program: participant demographics and native languages, diversity in program design, enrollment rates and student educational characteristics, instructional and contact hours, participant employment patterns, measures of student achievement gains, staffing and staff development, costs, and concerns, challenges, and anticipated directions. A list of participating agencies, with addresses, is appended. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 369 304

THE NEW YORK CITY ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE

Final Report 1991-92

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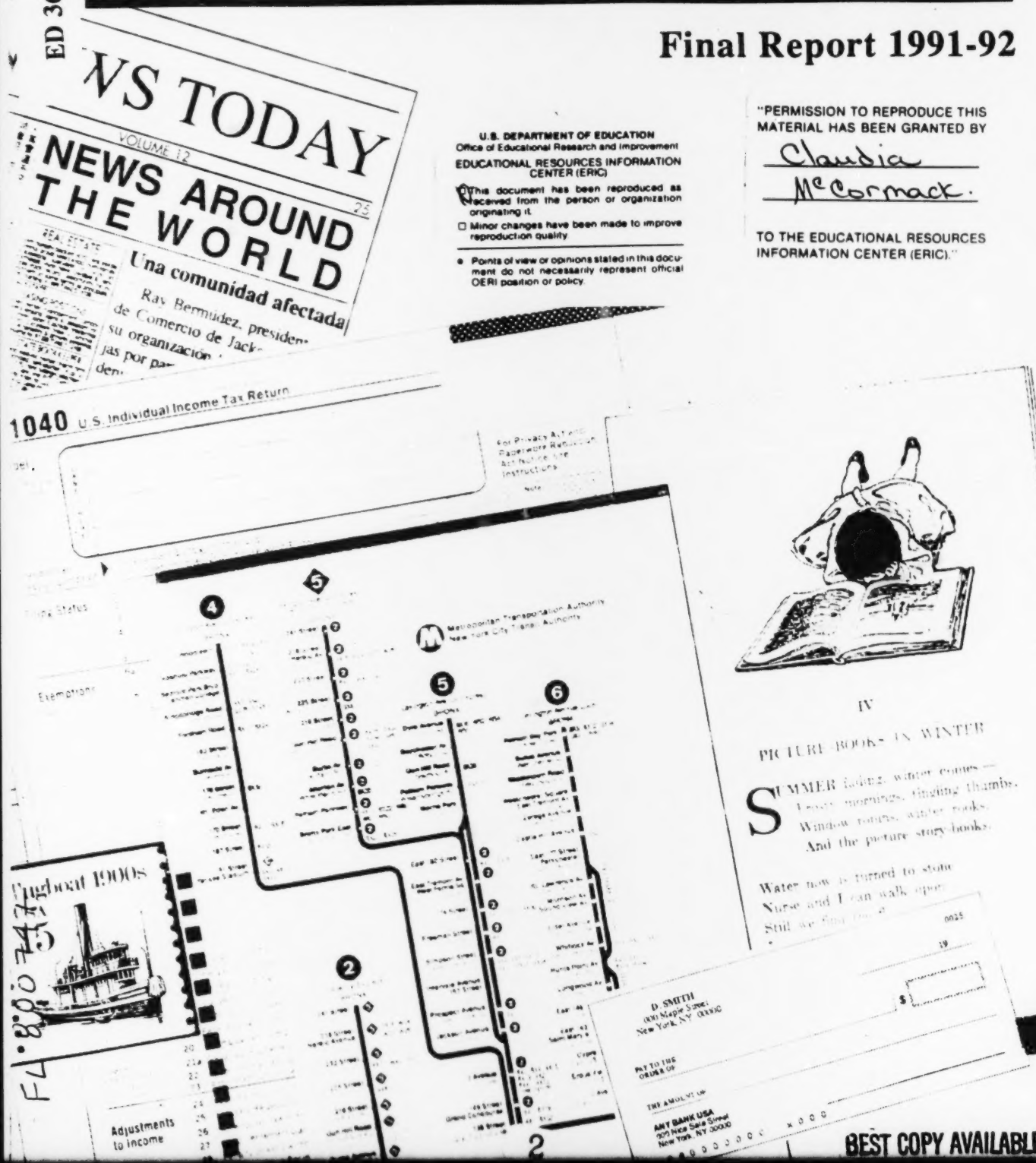
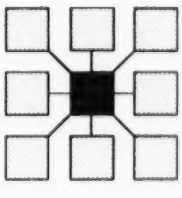


THE NEW YORK CITY ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE

FINAL REPORT 1991-92



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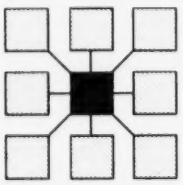

DECEMBER 1993

This report has been prepared under a contract with the Office of the Mayor, the City of New York, and the New York State Education Department, as part of the support service component of the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative.

Additional funding for this report was provided by the New York Times Company Foundation, Inc.

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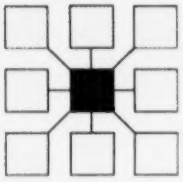
PREFACE



During the past few years, literacy has received increasing national attention. The National Literacy Act was passed in 1991, the National Institute for Literacy was created, and most recently, the results of the National Adult Literacy Survey were released. These events, along with many others in localities across the country, have drawn the nation's attention to the increasing need and demand for adult literacy services in our communities.

Unfortunately, this increase in attention has not as yet been accompanied by increased funding for program initiatives. In fact, during the 1991-92 year, programs in the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative received less support and were able to serve fewer students than before. Within this context, however, practitioners and administrators met the challenge of providing quality instructional and support services to more than 57,000 adult literacy students. Programs developed new strategies and approaches to curriculum development, retention, assessment, multicultural sensitivity, student leadership and outreach.

Those and other initiatives address the varied hopes and expectations of adult literacy students. The accomplishments and commitment evident in adult literacy students, practitioners and administrators, who work together to seek increased opportunity for students throughout our city, must be commended.

In addition to describing innovative directions in literacy programs, *The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative Final Report 1991-92* presents information on the scope of the Initiative's activities during the year. A demographic profile of students in the Initiative is presented, as is information about enrollment patterns in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Basic Education (BE), Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL) and Math classes. A new section examines country of origin and native language data, and another presents "voices from the field." The challenges facing the field, especially those such as long waiting lists and funding concerns, are described, many accompanied by the words of program staff and students.

This report was prepared by the staff of the Literacy Assistance Center, based on data furnished by the literacy providers whose programs are funded by the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative. These providers include the New York City Public Schools, the City University of New York, the Community Development Agency, the Brooklyn Public Library, the New York Public Library and the Queens Borough Public Library. The staff at the LAC gratefully acknowledge the work of the provider agencies and their program staff, and of the New York City Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy and the New York State Education Department, in collecting the data and in responding so generously to our requests for clarification and additional information.

Many people have contributed to this report. We especially thank William Askins who served as its author, Laima Jankauskus who served as research assistant, Douglas Tyler who served as administrative assistant and Ed Noriega who completed the design and layout.

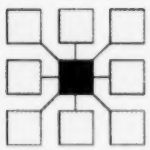
Karen Pearl

Executive Director

INTRODUCTION

"So welcome to my school. And good luck. But you won't need it. Because the teachers are wonderful and understanding."

(NYCALI ESOL STUDENT)



The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI), founded in 1984, has helped hundreds of thousands of adult New Yorkers expand their literacy and English language skills. During fiscal year 1991-1992, NYCALI programs provided services to 57,676[1] adult learners throughout the City.

The Initiative is jointly funded and coordinated by the New York City Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy and the New York State Education Department. NYCALI programs are offered through six literacy provider agencies (LPAs): the City University of New York (CUNY), the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS), the three public library systems of New York City (New York, Brooklyn and Queens Borough Public Libraries) and 38 community-based organizations under the direction of the Community Development Agency (CDA). While most NYCALI students take classes in Basic Education (BE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), others take classes in Math or Basic Education in Native Language (BENL). In addition to classes, NYCALI makes available a variety of other educational settings, such as study tables, language labs, and one-to-one and small group tutoring.

Additional services are provided to NYCALI programs by the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC), which was established to offer technical assistance and centralized support services, maintain a data base on all students and programs in the Initiative, and provide staff development and system-wide research in support of program development and policy planning. The LAC operates a citywide referral hotline for adults and out-of-school youth seeking educational services and for those who wish to volunteer in literacy programs.

The adults who participate in NYCALI programs bring a great diversity of backgrounds, needs and goals to their educational experience. A large proportion of NYCALI students are recent immigrants, with varied educational backgrounds and native language literacy skills. While many NYCALI students work full-time, others are in low or semi-skilled occupations, and a large number are struggling with recent or chronic unemployment. Literacy and language instruction serves many NYCALI students as one mechanism to improved career opportunities.

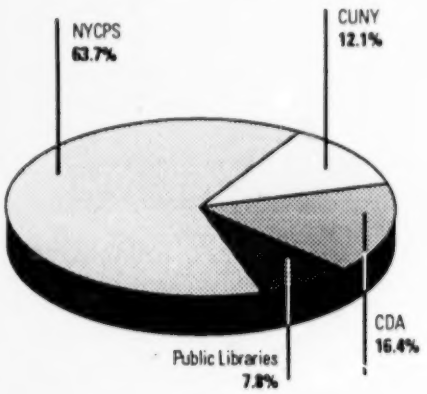
Students range across the spectrum in age, from 17 to people into their 70s. NYCALI participants have very diverse educational backgrounds, from no formal schooling to college educated professionals. BE students may include some who are working towards a high school equivalency degree, retirees

[1] In past Annual Reports, the reported NYCALI student population excluded those enrolled in Basic Education level 9-12. Including these students in the 1990-91 year, the NYCALI student population totaled 60,667. The 1991-92 population is therefore 2,991 (4.9%) less than it was in 1990-91.

who can now continue their education and parents who want to advance their skills as a means of helping their children in school. ESOL students may include recent immigrants with less than three years education in their native language, others who have high school or college degrees and literacy in several languages, and students with a variety of educational goals.

The family situations of NYCALI participants also vary greatly. Many are parents, and must find programs that have schedules which allow them to meet all their responsibilities. Others are single, involved in extended households, or have diverse combinations of childcare, housekeeping and job responsibilities.

NYCALI Students by LPA



The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative Final Report 1991-92

NYCALI programs meet the diverse needs of their students by offering flexibility in class scheduling and a variety of teaching methodologies, including individual tutoring, small work groups, independent study labs and computer-assisted instruction, as well as conventional class settings. Many NYCALI providers also offer comprehensive support and career exploration services which further encourage student retention and enhance the educational experience.

DEMOGRAPHICS

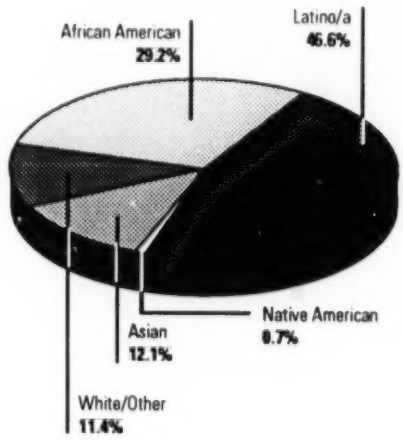
"There were times when I wasn't able to read a good book. I used to get frustrated and lose interest. Now, I realize that I wasted all that time in my life. But in spite of that, I'm actually working in a day care center as an assistant teacher."

(NYCALI Student)

NYCALI serves a diverse population, with significant cultural, educational and other demographic differences. During the 1991-92 fiscal year, 57,676 students studied in the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative. The following charts present the most significant demographic characteristics of this student population.[2]

The greatest proportion of NYCALI students are Latino and African American; in percentages they are nearly identical to program year 1990-91. The percentage of White and other students slightly decreased, from 13.9% in 1990-91 to 11.4% in 1991-92. Both the Asian and Native American proportion of students slightly increased, with 12.1% Asians and .7% Native Americans in 1991-92, compared to 10.3% and .3% for those populations in 1990-91.

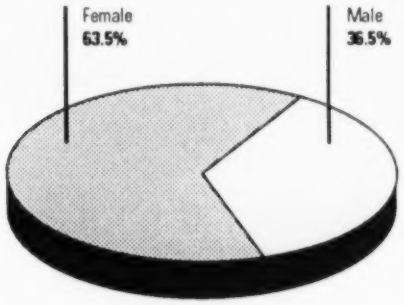
ETHNICITY [3]



2 All tables in this section except native language data were compiled from the final reports of NYCPS, CUNY, CDA and NYPL. BPL and QBPL do not report on ethnicity, gender or age.

3 Ethnicity categories are based on the definitions used in the 1990 Federal census. African American includes Afro-Caribbean and African, Asian includes Pacific Islander and Native American includes Eskimo.

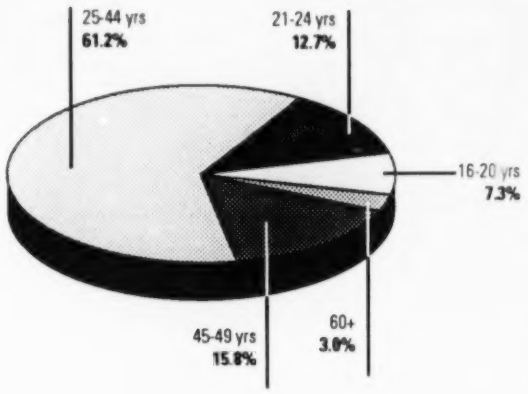
GENDER



The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative Final Report 1991-92

The student population in 1991-92 was nearly two-thirds female. This preponderance of women students has been characteristic of NYCALI since its inception.

AGE



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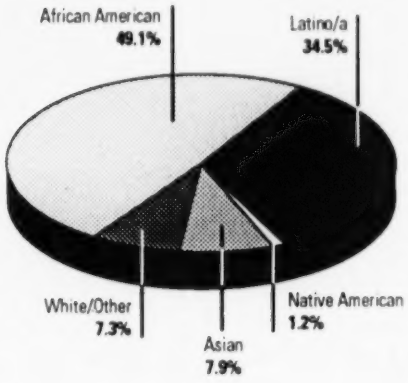
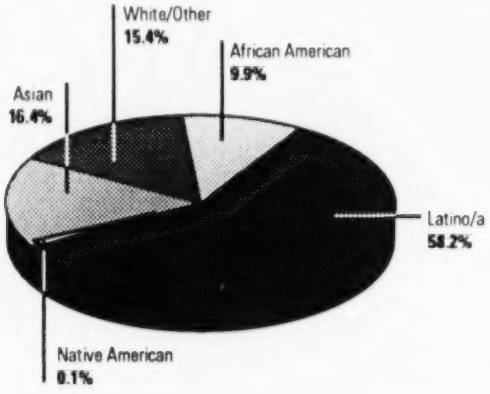
Over 60% of NYCALI students are between 25 and 44 years of age. While the proportion of each age group has remained relatively stable in NYCALI since 1988-89, there has been a slight but steady trend towards increasing numbers of students in the 25-44 age range, from 58.4% in 1988-89 to 61.2% this year. Conversely, the percentage of students between 16 and 20 years old has steadily decreased in these years, from 8.9% to 7.3%.

ETHNICITY - BE



ETHNICITY - ESOL



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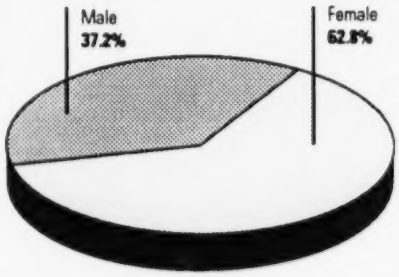
GENDER - BE



GENDER - ESOL

The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative Final Report 1991-92

Almost half of the Basic Education students are African American, and over one-third are Latino/a. These proportions have stayed about the same for the past several program years in NYCALI. Similarly, the proportions of Asian, Native American, White and other students have remained fairly stable.

The highest proportion of ESOL students continues to be Latino/a, with over 58%. Asians (16.4%), and Whites/others (15.4%) have also shown relatively little change over the last few years.

Women continue to enroll in BE and ESOL classes at a much higher rate than men. As in recent years, over 60% of the BE and ESOL students in NYCALI are women.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND NATIVE LANGUAGE

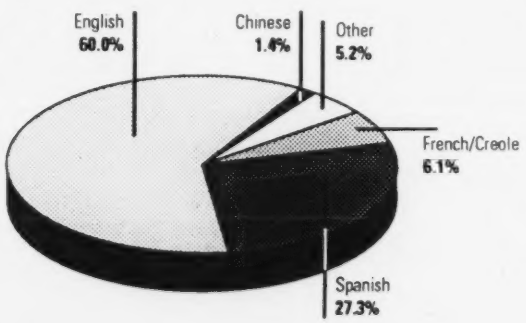
"We are an English class of 22 students: 16 women and 6 men. We came from many countries: Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, Egypt, Iraq, Bangladesh, Senegal, Thailand and Czechoslovakia."

(INTRODUCTION TO A COLLECTION OF STUDENT WRITINGS FROM AN ESOL-3 CLASS)

Information on NYCALI students' country of origin and native language background indicates how language background influences the program needs of NYCALI students.

In 1991-92 NYCALI students came from over 130 countries with varying degrees of proficiency in a wide variety of languages. The highest participation in NYCALI is by people from Spanish-speaking countries; 43.5% of NYCALI students are from countries or territories where Spanish is the sole or dominant language or colonial language. Seventy percent of these students attend ESOL classes. As expected, students from countries where English is dominant or common as a second language are found overwhelmingly (94.9%) in Basic Education classes. This category includes

BE - NATIVE LANGUAGE[4]



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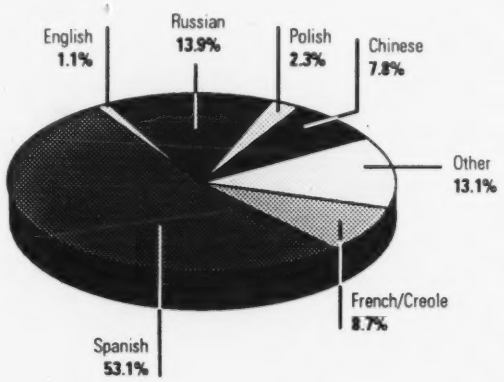
ESOL - NATIVE LANGUAGE



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4 Native language is based on the dominant language spoken in the country of origin, or the presence of a standard colonial language in that country. Data for this analysis are from the NYCALI database compiled by Metis, Inc.

people of various ethnicity from North American and Caribbean countries (the United States, Jamaica, Trinidad), some Latin American countries (Belize), and many African nations (Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria). Speakers of Russian and Chinese languages (e.g., Mandarin and Cantonese), are predominantly found in ESOL (98% for Russian and 88.2% for Chinese), while speakers of French dialects, especially Haitian Creole, are found in both ESOL and BE. More people of Puerto Rican descent (52.4%) are found in BE than are enrolled in ESOL classes.

While it cannot be determined which is the dominant language for immigrants from some countries (e.g., Vietnam where French, Vietnamese and Hmong are spoken), country of origin is a very good predictor of the language services needed by students.

- *Five countries contribute nearly 80% of the Spanish-speaking NYCALI students: the Dominican Republic (35.6%), Puerto Rico (16.6%), Columbia (10.5%), Ecuador (10.3%) and Mexico (6.2%).*

- *Eighty-five percent of those from English-speaking countries are from the United States (56.6%), Jamaica (14.7%), Trinidad (7.8%) and Guyana (6.4%).*

- *Included in the "Other" category are over 500 Polish speakers (virtually all in ESOL), 550 Vietnamese, 200 Korean and nearly 300 Arabic speakers.*

PROGRAM DIVERSITY

NYCALI programs have developed a variety of educational formats, schedules and philosophies to accommodate the needs, interests, expectations and backgrounds of adult students. Classes are offered in all five boroughs during the day, evening and on weekends. Program sites are at public schools, public libraries, community-based organizations, college campuses, religious centers and other venues.

A wide range of instructional models are used to engage students' interests and accommodate their learning styles. Instruction is offered in conventional classes, in small groups, as individual tutoring and in study labs. Computer-assisted instruction (CAI), using appropriate software packages, is individualized to the needs of specific students or groups of students. NYCALI continues to expand the implementation of computer-assisted instruction (CAI).

Initiative programs also provide many other student services and counseling such as workplace classes, legal counseling and the inclusion of drug rehabilitation support. This allows at-risk youth, ex-offenders, recent immigrants or refugees and other populations with special needs to be served by NYCALI programs.

PROGRAM ENROLLMENT

The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative provides instruction in Basic Education (BE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Basic Education in Native Language (BENL) and Math.

Basic Education classes aim to improve reading, writing, communication and math skills of students who test below the ninth grade level on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Some programs individualize the TABE for specific populations or use additional intake assessment procedures to appraise students' proficiency. Based on the intake procedures, students are placed into appropriate classes. In some programs, students are placed into one of four BE instructional levels. In other programs, students are placed into mixed-level classes or in instructional settings designed to address special areas and interests.

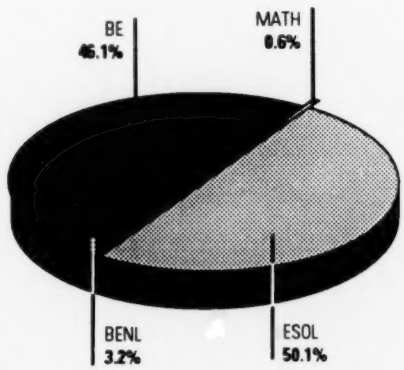
ESOL classes provide instruction to improve the speaking and listening comprehension skills of non-native speakers, as well as their reading and writing. As in BE, some students are placed into one of four educational levels in ESOL by testing with the oral/aural John and Fred tests[5], others into mixed level classes and others into classes focused on special contents.

BENL instruction aims to improve students' reading, writing, communication and math skills in their native language. BENL instruction is based on several assumptions, including the belief that improving the literacy and educational skills of students in their native language facilitates their later acquisition of English literacy skills. Placement in BENL classes is often determined using the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education (SABE) test or the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) for Spanish speakers. Alternative methods are used for speakers of other languages.

Similar to past years, the great majority of adult learners in NYCALI programs in 1991-92 were enrolled in Basic Education and English for Speakers of Other Languages. ESOL students made up 50.1% of all NYCALI participants, while 46.1% were registered in Basic Education classes. Another 3.2% of all NYCALI students attended BENL classes, while .6% were in Math only classes.

5 In program year 1992-93, these tests were replaced initiative-wide by the NYS Place test.

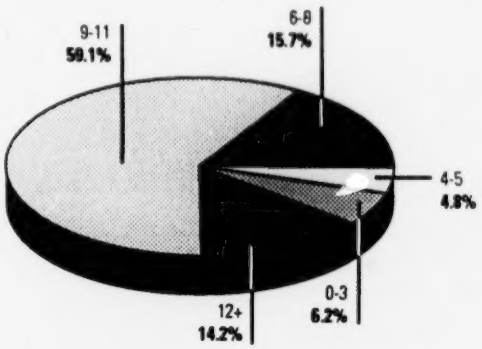
ENROLLMENT: BE, ESOL, BENL & MATH[6]



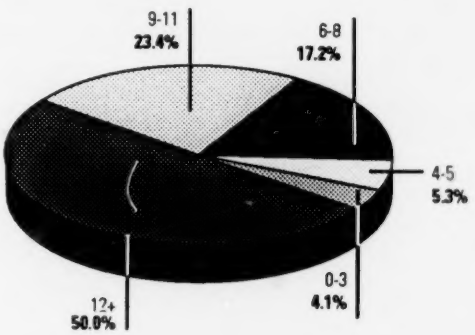
Adult learners in NYCALI programs have diverse educational backgrounds. Over 25% of ESOL students and over 27% of BE students have completed less than 9 years of schooling either in the United States or elsewhere. On the other hand, many NYCALI students have some high school level education. About 50% of ESOL students have completed high school or have earned higher degrees, although the overwhelming majority (96%) were not educated in the United States. About 14% of Basic Education students have twelve years of schooling or more; half of them were educated outside the United States.

6 A total of 57,327 students were placed in these programs. An additional 261 students received instruction in library-run lab settings, and 88 in non-traditional classes.

HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED-BE



HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED-ESOL



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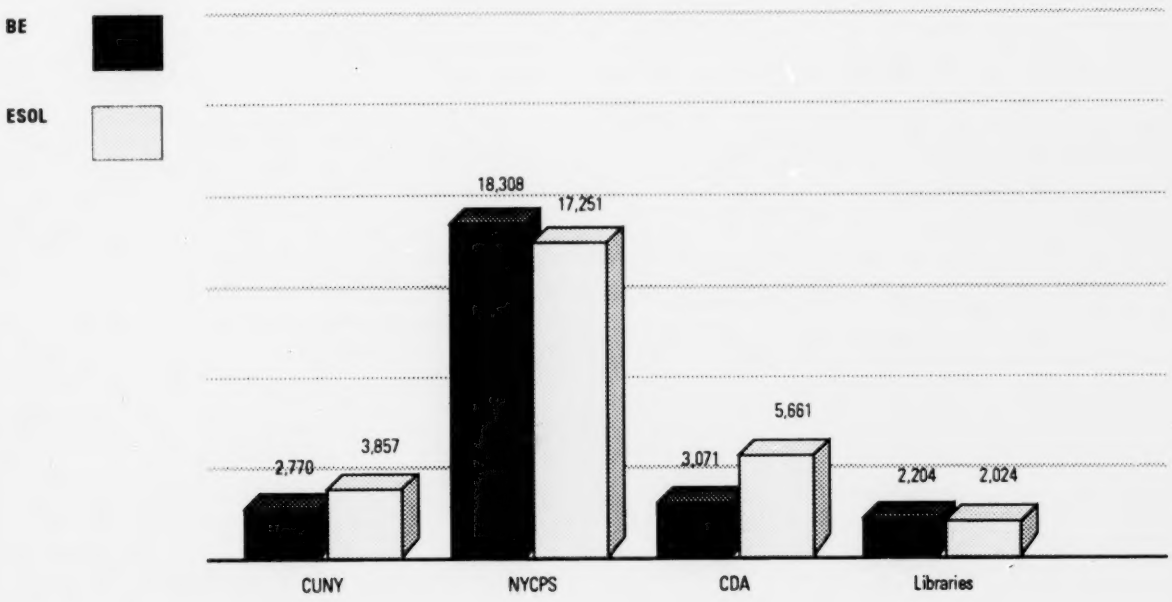
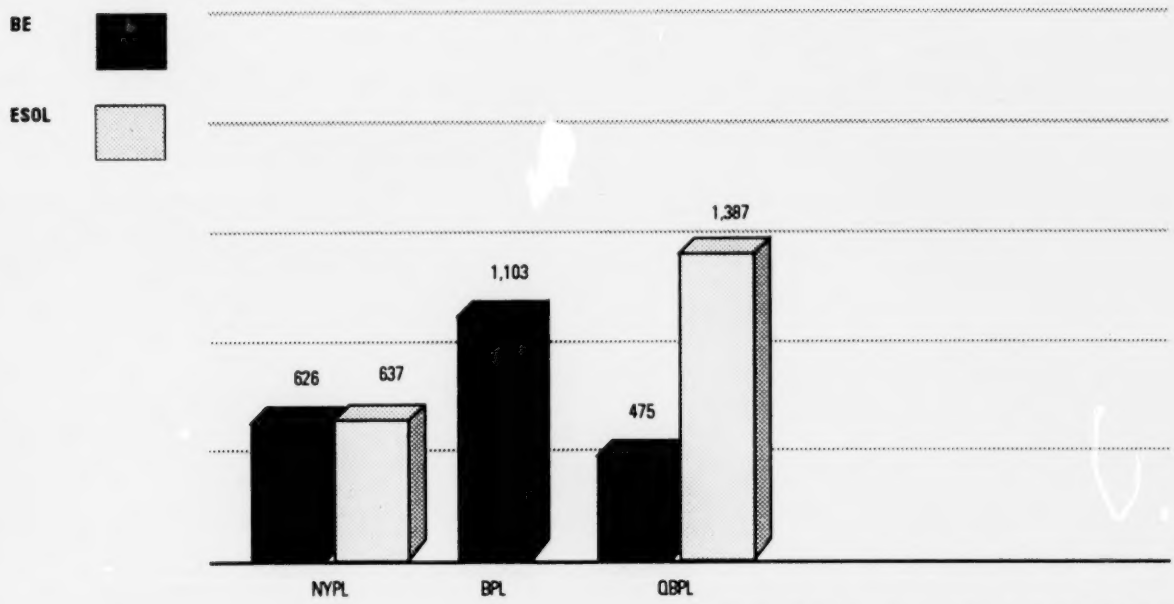
The number of students enrolled in BE and ESOL classes offered by each agency has not changed significantly over the last several years. The one notable exception is the implementation of ESOL services in 1991-92 in the Queens Borough Public Library system.

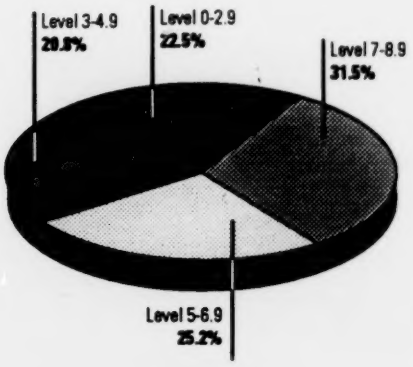
BE & ESOL Enrollment by Literacy Provider Agency



BE & ESOL Enrollment by Library System



BE Instructional Level [7]



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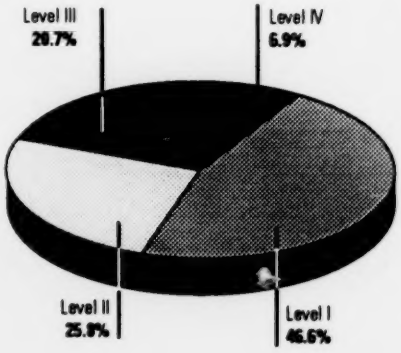
ESOL Instructional Level [8]



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A greater percentage of BE students are found in the higher levels of instruction while a greater percentage of ESOL students are found in the lower levels. While the percentage of students in each ESOL level is basically identical to last year's enrollment, BE has shown some changes. Last year 17.4% of BE students were in Level 0-2.9, while 22.5% entered in Level I this year.

7 Table compiled from all six literacy providers.

8 Table compiled from data from NYCPS, CUNY, CDA and NYPL. BPL does not have ESOL classes and QBPL does not report level information on its 1,387 ESOL students.

INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS AND CONTACT HOURS

Instructional hours are the number of hours of instruction offered by programs. This includes the number of hours spent by teachers in classrooms, hours of individual and small group tutoring, and laboratory hours. Contact hours are the number of hours of total student attendance. A class of 20 students lasting one hour would represent one instructional hour and 20 contact hours.

NYCALI instructional hours offered in 1991-92 totaled 429,255. The total number of contacts hours offered by NYCALI was 5,807,193.

More instructional and contact hours were offered in the lower levels of ESOL and BENL, whereas more hours were provided in the upper levels of BE and Math. Overall, NYCALI programs provided more instructional and contact hours in lower instructional levels.

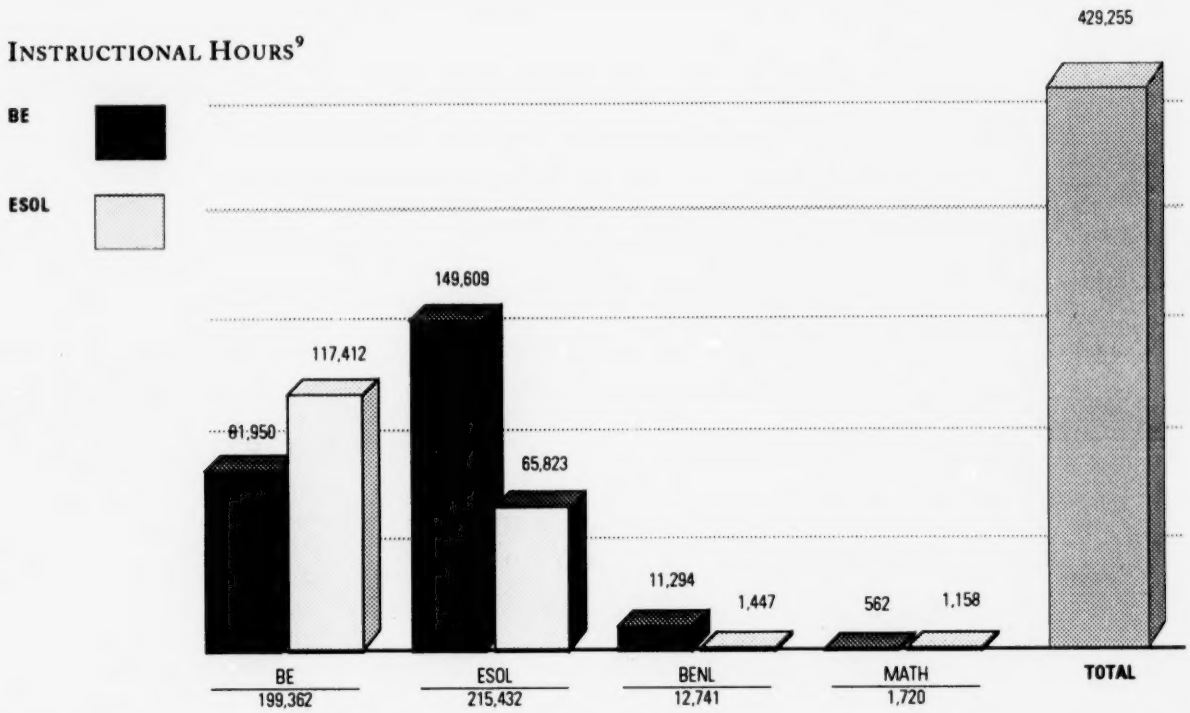
The number of instructional hours per student is greater in the lower levels of BENL and Math, whereas the number of instructional hours per student is higher in the upper levels of ESOL. They are about the same in all levels of BE.

On average, BE students at the lower instructional levels (0-4.9) attended classes for 140 contact hours each, while BE students at the higher instructional levels (5-8.9) attended about 117 contact hours each. On average, ESOL students in the higher instructional levels (III-IV) attended classes for 139 contact hours, compared to ESOL students in the lower instructional levels (I-II) who attended 118 hours each. In all cases, the numbers of contact hours per student are greater than last year.

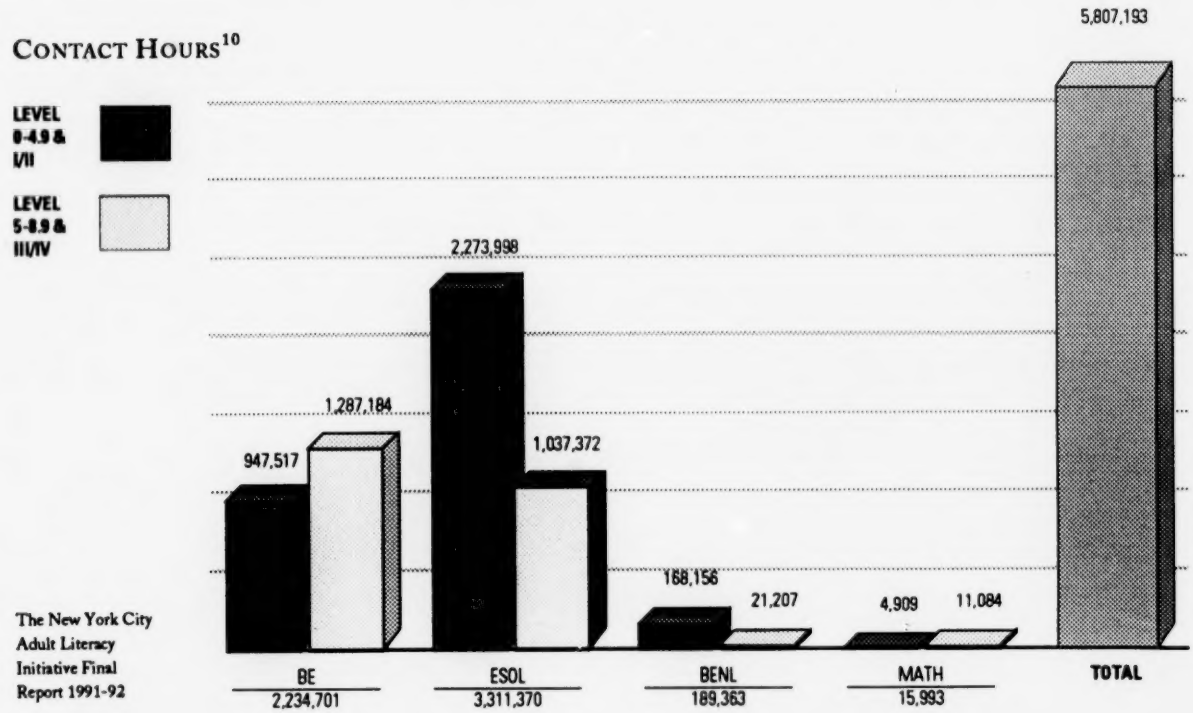
The ratio of student contact hours to instructional hours indicates the average attendance per class in each category of instruction.

- *There were approximately 12 students per instructional hour at all BE instructional levels.*
- *There were approximately 15 students per instructional hour at all ESOL instructional levels.*
- *There were approximately 15 students per instructional hour in BENL classes.*
- *There were approximately 9 students per instructional hour in Math classes.*

Instructional Hours[9]



Contact Hours[10]



The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative Final Report 1991-92

LITERACY AND EMPLOYMENT

"I am not going to stop going to school until I can be able to learn something so that I can have a job and support my children on my own."

(NYCALI BE STUDENT)

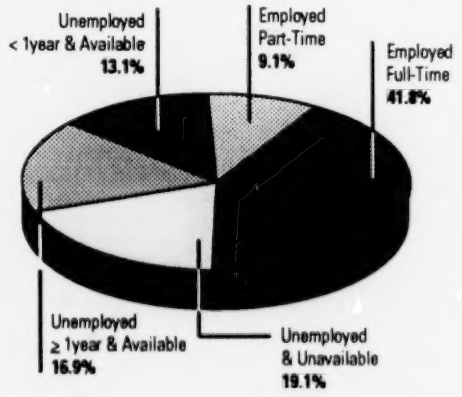
One of the primary reasons adults enter literacy programs is to improve their chances of finding employment or of getting better jobs. Practitioners and policy makers support these goals as they, too, understand that improving educational skills enhances employment opportunities for adult New Yorkers.

Many NYCALI students are unemployed or underemployed. Fully 30% of NYCALI students are unemployed and seeking employment. Program administrators report that among their students who are fully employed (about 42%), many indicate the desire to improve their job situation.

Some NYCALI programs respond to their students' ambitions by including instructional components that aim to increase prevocational skills, such as job-seeking skills, while other programs focus on developing specific job skills in students.

NYCALI programs have continued their partnership with state, city and federal agencies to prepare public assistance recipients for entry into the job market. As a result of a reorganization of funding, monies previously channeled to NYCALI have been allocated to fund BEGIN programs which serve people on public assistance. These funds are matched by federal monies, and thus increase the overall funding for adult literacy in New York.[11] NYCALI practitioners and administrators continue to work closely with the New York City Human Resources Administration and other agencies to develop and implement initiatives in welfare reform such as the BEGIN language program.

ADULT STUDENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT THE TIME OF ENROLLMENT IN PROGRAM YEAR 1991-92



The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative Final Report 1991-92

9 Total of instructional hours includes NYCPS, CUNY and CDA.

10 Table compiled with data from NYCPS, CUNY and CDA. Total contact hours includes 42,053 hours of lab time, and 13,713 hours from non-traditional classes.

11 While these funds contribute to the city's overall service to people in need of literacy services, BEGIN students and services are not included in this report.

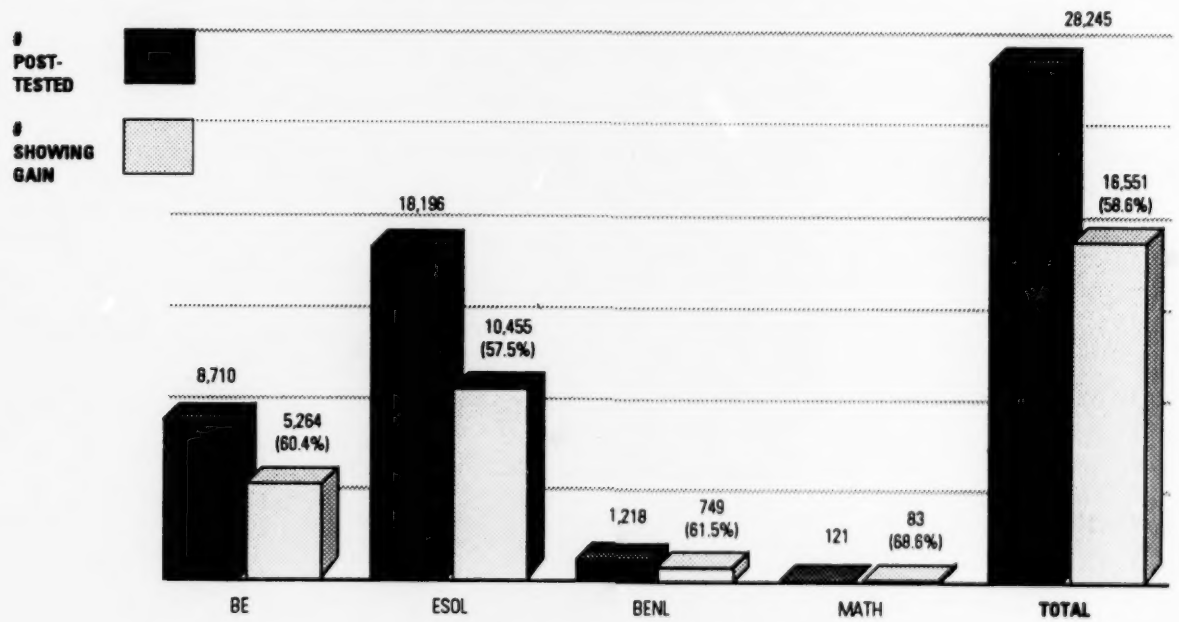
MEASURES OF STUDENT SUCCESS

"The program held a spirited graduation and awards ceremony on June 5, 1992. Accomplishments made by all the students were acknowledged. Special honor was given to the 20 BE students who graduated from BE to GED, 9 students who graduated from BENL to GED, and the 27 students who completed ESOL."

(NYCALI PROGRAM DIRECTOR)

Success for adult learners in NYCALI programs can be gauged in several ways. Student progress can be measured through a post-test on the TABE test for BE or the John and Fred tests for ESOL. These results produce a statistical profile of the level of gain across NYCALI programs. Students also report on their significant achievements, such as finding employment, that result from their involvement in NYCALI programs. Less tangible, and not easily quantifiable, are the gains in self-esteem and confidence which have implications for adult learners in their jobs, families and communities.

STUDENTS SHOWING TEST GAIN



The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative Final Report 1991-92

Of the 28,245 NYCALI students who received post-tests in 1991-92, 16,551 (58.6%) demonstrated gain on standardized tests. Gain for NYCALI students is defined as an increase of .5 or more in grade level on the TABE test for BE students and an increase of 10 or more points on the John or Fred test for ESOL students.[12]

Many students reported achievements during their NYCALI educational experience. Over 4,000 students reported finding work or a better job. Nearly 2,000 registered to vote, a service offered at many NYCALI programs; nearly 1,000 moved from ESOL to BE classes; and, another 1,200 entered high school equivalency classes from BE classes.

Other significant achievements are changes in students' motivation, self-esteem, expectations, social effectiveness, leadership skills and critical thinking abilities. Some programs report on these aspects of student success. One way of assessing these more elusive factors is through student writings. Examples of student writings from the 1991-92 program cycle appear throughout this report, and indicate some of the insights, desires and expectations expressed by NYCALI students.

"The first day I was scared. I did not feel like reading. I didn't have to. But I needed to learn so I read. It was funny that it was good at the same time. And now my teacher tells me to keep it short, because I keep on talking. I write a lot as you can see. More than before."

(NYCALI BE STUDENT)

12 Many students showed increases in their standardized tests or otherwise demonstrated educational gains, but did not reach the defined level of achievement.

STAFFING & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

"Our staff feels more united in their educational effort and believe they're focused better on the issues facing them in improving their program and better serving the complex needs of our students."

(NYCALI Program Director)

NYCALI program success is based to a great degree on the quality of program staff. During 1991-92, NYCALI programs included over 1,700 full- and part-time paid administrative, instructional and other support staff, and an additional 1,500 volunteers. Due to budget reductions in the 1991-92 year, paid staff at most provider agencies was reduced. For NYCPS, CDA and CUNY, the number of paid staff went from 1,775 in 1990-91 to 1,613 in 1991-92, a reduction of 9%.

Staff experience ranges from career professionals with academic degrees in adult education, to volunteers with less traditional education backgrounds, including former program students who contribute their time to improving literacy in New York City. All NYCALI programs have made staff development a central focus for ensuring continued program quality and improvement. Staff receive training appropriate to their needs, experience and involvement in programs.

Staff training includes in-house program meetings; staff mentoring; preparation time to research educational periodicals, manuals, videos, software and other media; staff development activities offered by all providers (CUNY, NYCPS, the Library systems, CDA and the Literacy Assistance Center); and through classes, workshops and events held by non-NYCALI organizations. Staff development plans are designed to meet the needs of the specific staff at each NYCALI program. During 1991-92, the overwhelming majority of programs achieved the staff development goals they set at the beginning of the year.

Within NYCALI, the Literacy Assistance Center acts as a central resource for staff development. During the 1991-92 program year, the LAC held staff development sessions on administering standardized tests, math instruction, intergenerational literacy, and a four-day institute on BE and ESOL instructional approaches. The LAC Clearinghouse is regularly used by practitioners who need curriculum and instructional advice. Clearinghouse classroom and reference material are available on loan.

NYCALI staff development continues to cover a broad range of educational issues, often exploring new teaching materials, strategies and curricula, including whole language development, multicultural education, computer-assisted instruction (CAI), family literacy, workforce literacy, community literacy, and other creative classroom and extra-classroom activities.

Understanding student diversity remains a critical issue for all educational systems serving New York's changing population. NYCALI staff received training in understanding cultural variation among

adult students. This included attitudes towards education and teachers, students' expectations of what a class for adults would involve, cultural variation in behaviors of respect and etiquette, and some of the cultural aspects which affect attendance and retention. Staff also participated in workshops which dealt with racism, sexism and ethnocentrism.

Staff received training in health issues (including AIDS and drug awareness), group dynamics, and standardized and authentic assessment approaches.

Many programs focused on a collaborative approach to adult education, with increasing teacher involvement in program management and decision-making; greater interchange between BE, ESOL, Math and BENL teachers; integration of instructional and non-instructional activities; collaborative development of curriculum; peer observation and conferences. In some cases, programs have been restructured to reflect teacher input and facilitate staff cooperation. Teacher groups are emerging at many NYCALI programs.

For some LPAs, volunteers play a critical role as teachers, counselors, professionals, case managers and administrators. The number of volunteers in CDA, NYCPS and CUNY increased from 751 in 1990-91 to 827 in 1991-92. About 700 volunteers participated in providing services offered by the three public library systems. Volunteers received training and ongoing staff development from their programs, and many participated in the workshops and other activities offered by the LPAs, the LAC and other organizations.

Several NYCALI programs now include current and past students as formal or informal participants in staff development and program planning activities. Despite cultural and language differences, NYCALI students participated in discussions about program design. Many programs have recognized that adult students are their own best advocates and have facilitated student input.

Through increasingly comprehensive and ongoing staff development activities, NYCALI programs are enhancing their ability to serve their specific populations and to improve the quality of instructional activities and their students' performances.

"A long time volunteer tutor assisted with the tutor training for beginning readers and prepared a complete curriculum package to be handed to incoming tutors."

(NYCALI Program Director)

PROGRAM COST

NYCALI funding from the State and City of New York for the fiscal year 1991-92 totaled $29,826,378.[13] The City University of New York, the New York City Public Schools and community-based organizations received $26,146,026 in support of the literacy services they provide. Funding applied directly to instructional services amounted to $21,544,231, or 82.4% of the total funding.

The three public library systems received $2,215,918 which supported small-group, individual and computer-assisted instruction and other direct services to adult students. Libraries provided a total of 39,880 hours of computer instruction to 3,836 students, and circulated 166,275 books and related materials to adult learners.

Based on the full allocation of funds to The City University of New York, the New York City Public Schools and community-based organizations:

- *The average cost per instructional hour was $60.91.*
- *The average cost per contact hour was $4.50.*
- *The average cost per student was $558.10.*

The remaining NYCALI allocation of $1,464,434 was used to provide coordination and support services to all literacy providers in the Initiative. These funds supported many of the activities provided by the Literacy Assistance Center, including the hotline referral service, technical assistance and staff development, data collection and analysis of NYCALI students and programs, the dissemination of research reports and the publication of the *Literacy Update*, a newsletter serving the New York City literacy community. In addition, the Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy and the New York State Education Department provided policy and management services to NYCALI.

13 Funding for NYCALI was reduced in 1991-92, as monies were re-allocated to BEGIN. BEGIN funds are matched by federal monies, increasing the funds in support of adult literacy services citywide.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN NYCALI PROGRAMS

"Measuring and recording accurately the gain of any student is a difficult process, but it is more difficult if we only look at the numbers. We must look at the people, their progress in reading, writing, leadership, and critical thinking..."

(NYCALI Program Director)

The adult literacy population in New York City brings diverse and changing needs and expectations to NYCALI programs. In response, Initiative programs have explored and developed a broad range of innovative approaches which provide students with rich, meaningful educational experiences. Authentic assessment procedures, multicultural curricula and awareness, worker literacy, family literacy and student program involvement are some of these recent innovations. New York City's literacy provider agencies also cooperate with other social service providers to enable adult learners to acquire the skills they need to function successfully in New York City.

Assessment Strategies

The cultural and educational diversity of the NYCALI population requires that testing and assessment of student progress be responsive and appropriate to individual program populations. Students acquire significant new skills which are not captured by the standardized tests usually given to adult learners. NYCALI practitioners have expanded their repertoire of assessment approaches by incorporating alternative procedures in their battery of assessment activities, allowing for recognition of a wider range of students' educational accomplishments.

Standardized assessment instruments function to provide general measures of student test performance across the NYCALI system. Yet some NYCALI practitioners feel that standardized tests are not useful on a programmatic level - they are not sufficiently flexible or sensitive to program populations, and therefore, cannot be used to inform programs about the success or failure of many components of their curriculum and mode of instruction.

Alternative or authentic assessment approaches have gained increasing attention throughout the educational community. In NYCALI, increasing numbers of providers are adding alternative assessment modalities to their program design. Student portfolios have been implemented at several programs, and are found to increase student and staff awareness of student progress. Similarly, students' self- and peer-evaluations recognize that adult learners can be self-critical and reflective, and in turn promote confidence in these skills.

To further the use and understanding of authentic assessment approaches, NYCALI practitioners have formed an Assessment Task Force. The Task Force, which has been meeting since 1988, explores new assessment techniques and shares them with interested practitioners and programs.

Family Literacy and Parent Education

"One new project, a parent organizing project, involved our staff and students in helping parents in several schools develop and present issues to their schools' principals and district leadership."

(NYCALI Program Director)

Family literacy and parent education activities have become increasingly important in many Initiative programs. Some programs have incorporated parenting topics into BE and ESOL curricula, others have developed classes and workshops where parenting issues are the focus for literacy skills acquisition.

Some programs have classes where parents and their children attend together. This intergenerational educational approach to learning both literacy and parenting skills has led to several family education programs or centers being established within NYCALI. A weekend family library program brought parents and children together for intergenerational workshops. Another program combined BE and ESOL parents and children for a book-making project which called upon community and kinship connections in learning, sharing and encouraging literacy skills.

One program held non-traditional classes on children's literature which developed a critical approach to dealing with issues of race and sex stereotyping in children's books. Parents developed active reading strategies with their children and supported each other in maintaining these schedules.

Some programs offered weekly trips for parents and children to the Bronx Zoo, the New York Aquarium, the Intrepid Museum, the Ellis Island Museum of Immigration and other places of interest in New York City. This fostered a sense of community among students, and introduced both parents and children to New York City neighborhoods and activities that they otherwise would not have explored. Parents at one program were inspired to initiate their own family activities, which were then used as topics for discussion and writing.

Worker Literacy and Workforce Preparation

"I left my country because I can't find a job easy to make a living. My dream in the United States is to be somebody. I want to learn English and be a registered nurse. I was married. I divorce my husband. I get two children. I working very hard for myself and my children."

(NYCALI ESOL Student)

Worker literacy and adult vocational education have become central issues for many programs in NYCALI. Both the continued immigration of adults unfamiliar with U.S. work practices and the ongoing transformation of the workplace have combined to make worker education a critical function for adult literacy education programs. Worker education in NYCALI takes one of three forms: literacy and career development education to develop or reinforce skills needed to enter the labor market; literacy and other skills associated with specific occupations; and literacy and worker empowerment, which expands workers' understanding of their rights and organizational opportunities. In 1991-92, some NYCALI worker education programs offered classes at work sites, often using the workplace as a resource for literacy development.

General career development education in NYCALI ranges from skills such as reading want ads and completing job applications, to preparing for civil service tests for uniformed service or state and municipal positions. One program received a grant specifically to develop a word processing and computer skills curriculum. Other programs have included basic computer education as a component of their regular classes. Another program combined field trips with an occupational resource curriculum module to help students identify career interests.

Many programs focus on functional workplace literacy skills. Some Initiative programs offer classes in literacy for specific occupations such as nursing, while others have collaborative programs with employment agencies or potential employers. Several programs have found themselves serving some of the increasing number of professionals who have immigrated to New York in recent years. This has led to ESOL classes designed to ease the language transition into specific occupations. One program has established a medical terminology class for foreign-born medical professionals and established a liaison with the medical community in an effort to establish a network for job opportunities. Other programs have established links with the Department of Employment or other service training agencies which aid adults in finding work.

NYCALI programs help place students in jobs through work-study programs, networking with both government and private agencies that place students and through job fairs. Ongoing staff devel-

opment offered to counselors, job developers and student advisors maintains a high level of program support for students. NYCALI staff organize and participate in employment-related activities enabling them to disseminate valuable information on employment opportunities and establish resources for students.

In the few NYCALI programs that primarily serve students with disabilities, vocational education approaches lead students towards competitive employment. At one site, adult learners with disabilities established a food cooperative which generated income, served the community and was incorporated into a curriculum which taught math, advertising, marketing and problem solving.

"Some people believe that when they come to the United States everything will be easy, but it is not like that. All that is shining is not necessarily gold."

(NYCALI STUDENT)

PROGRAMMING FOR RETENTION

"Education in a country like the United States is full of frustration for many students, children as well as adults. This is a problem that involves all of us."

(NYCALI STUDENT)

All adult education programs confront problems of student retention. Students report that they leave primarily because of health issues, child care demands, transportation difficulties, and family problems and to a much lesser degree, scheduling conflicts and their not getting the instruction they want. Typically, BE and ESOL programs in the United States lose 30 to 50% or more of their students within the first 20 hours of class time.[15] A longitudinal study of NYCALI students indicates that nearly 40% of all students discontinue participation within one year of joining a program, with very few students reporting program completion as the reason for leaving.[16] While the figures are not directly comparable, the magnitude of the retention problem has significant implications for NYCALI programs. Retention problems involve greater cost to programs that have to conduct intake and assessment services to replace lost students and maintain classes at optimal sizes.

NYCALI programs have been innovative in developing approaches that deal directly with the problem of student retention and attendance; these have resulted in improved retention rates at some programs. Some programs have changed their program schedules to meet the needs of students, often increasing evening and weekend classes. Others keep students

15 *The 1990-91 Analysis of the New York Adult Literacy Initiative Data Base With a Longitudinal Component From 1985-91*, by Peter C. Nwakeze, New York: Literacy Assistance Center, page 43. See also *Last Gamble on Education. Dynamics of Adult Basic Education*, Jack Mezirow, Gordon G. Darkenwald and Alan B. Knox, Washington D.C.: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., page 68.

16 "Attrition in Literacy Instruction and Strategies to Enhance Retention", by Peter C. Nwakeze, New York: Literacy Assistance Center, a chapter in an upcoming report using longitudinal data on NYCALI students.

together in a cohort to facilitate peer support, or use a three-month study module approach, which helps students focus on their goals. Another program has continuing students welcome new students and act as mentors for the first weeks of the program.

Many programs emphasize the development of a student community because they believe that peer encouragement increases retention. This includes using present and former students to recruit new students, thus easing the transition into peer networks. Others test all students before placing them on the waiting list, so that as soon as vacancies occur, students can be appropriately placed. At one BENL program, intake staff consider students' motivation as a key factor in enrollment.

In order to alleviate some of the demands on the students' time, programs have developed a variety of support services to meet the family and career needs of students—in 1991-92, these included young mothers' classes with cooperative child care, expanded student support workshops, resource manuals and guides to meet student needs, comprehensive referral services for social support and expanded tutoring services.

More rigorously enforcing student attendance has also increased retention rates. Some programs use a probation system linked to absences, other programs have students sign attendance contracts. Programs have reported that both approaches seem to increase retention.

Multicultural Awareness

Multicultural activities in NYCALI include approaches which celebrate specific cultural identities, introduce students to cultural diversity, and encourage sensitivity and respect for different cultural traditions. Many programs incorporated Black History month activities and other holidays and celebrations of cultural heritage, such as the Puerto Rican day parade or Chinese New Year. At one program, students participated in the African American Read-In Chain in February which culminated in the compiling of a booklet of their writings called "Inner Beauty."

Some programs focused on increasing student and staff awareness of cross-cultural differences and similarities, especially in the shared historical experiences of immigration.

At several programs, published authors and other cultural artists presented works dealing with the experience of being from a minority culture in the U.S. Elena Castedo, a noted author, gave a reading of selections from her novel and held a dialogue about her life as a poor, third world mother in America. A storytelling workshop developed into a project in which students wrote about, discussed and compared their families' experiences. Many programs incorporated cross-cultural reading and discussion into writing projects.

Instructional Approach

Literacy providers continue to offer classroom instruction in several settings such as traditional classes, one-on-one tutoring, and computer and language labs. Collaborative learning approaches have involved students in group study and in projects which expand literacy skills while providing significant community services, such as establishing and running a daycare and family literacy center, and creating a food cooperative.

Many programs are increasing their capacity to offer computer-assisted instruction (CAI). Using self-guided software, CAI often allows students to work on their own and progress at their own pace. In other cases, computer use reinforces the academic classroom instruction. One program implemented an electronic mail (E-Mail) network in which NYCALI students communicated via computer with students in White Plains and Albany. Other programs focused on teaching word processing skills to prepare students for employment. Several programs see the expansion of computer experiences as a priority.

Other technologies are also used in NYCALI programs. Tape recorders are used in interview projects, which then require transcription and focused writing skills. Many programs used recorded books as aids in reading and pronunciation. One class involved a videotaping project in which staff and students were interviewed on the topic "Technology in Adult Literacy." The tapes were then viewed and discussed, transcripts were compiled and essays were written about the use of video machines in education.

All NYCALI programs maintain libraries and collections of reading materials appropriate to the culturally diverse student population. The public libraries especially emphasize the availability of books for adult learners, and incorporate independent reading into study tables and other learning contexts.

NYCALI programs recognize that students are motivated to acquire skills when instruction speaks to significant issues in their lives. Programs simultaneously meet students' needs and increase literacy through contextualized curricula which address health education, AIDS awareness, tenants' rights, public school information, general legal and civil rights, and immigration issues.

An increasingly recognized issue in NYCALI is addressing the educational needs of students who have learning difficulties or health-related problems. Many NYCALI program staff indicated the need for more training and support in recognizing and instructing students with learning disabilities. It may be that some students, for reasons of an undiagnosed learning disability, find themselves going from program to program without learning significantly during their time of attendance. In 1991-92, some programs implemented approaches to meeting these special needs. One program arranged for a volunteer to work with a client who has ataxia (difficulty controlling and coordinating motor movements) and recon-

figured a computer keyboard to facilitate the student's writing.

NYCALI programs continued the use of other instructional approaches, such as whole language instruction. Many programs are exploring techniques based on the progressive educational ideas of Paulo Friere, such as the Frierean Theater Collective for BE and ESOL students established by one NYCALI program.

Student Participation in Program Operation

"One day I hope to become a director of a program so I can help people. I like to help people because they are human. I want to be a concerned director. I want to get to know people and to understand them better and they will learn to trust me."

(NYCALI BE Student)

In recent years, NYCALI programs have developed approaches and structures which involve students in instruction and program management, and in influencing the direction of programs. Peer tutors and student volunteers have become essential in some programs, and serve as sensitive and empathetic supporters of newer students. At one program, students elected peer mentors who then collected written and oral descriptions of each student's home, community and work situation. The peer mentors acted as supporters and advisors and participated in the intake process. Some programs formed student councils and/or student-teacher councils, and, at some programs, students participated in community meetings, ad hoc committees and informal discussions. Student leaders trained new student leaders in skill-oriented tasks. At one program, a joint staff-student committee interviewed all teacher applicants and participated in the hiring decision.

Curriculum development also incorporated student input through a consultation process which involved review and revision of curriculum throughout the school year. A few programs relaxed their organizational structure in response to student input and now function with student participation in all aspects of their programs.

Outreach activities

"The large number of people requesting ESOL classes and our inability to respond to this need continues to frustrate the program. As of July, 1991, we had over 1200 people register on the ESOL waiting list. To fill slots for September classes, we were calling students who had been waiting since April and May, 1990, more than a year. Often we would have to call 100 people to obtain 20 who were still at the same address and interested in enrolling in ESOL classes. In the meantime, upwards of fifty students per week were calling or coming to the office to inquire about enrolling in ESOL."

(NYCALI Program Director)

Although most Initiative programs have waiting lists of prospective students, some have difficulty filling classroom seats. Many programs continue to engage in outreach into student communities which need adult educational services.

Some programs have established networks or partnerships with local community groups and agencies and enroll people who are referred through these networks. Other programs advertise through the media, or target the newspapers which reach underserved communities. Many programs have found that former and current students are their best recruiters.

The three public library systems are especially active in establishing links with community and social service organizations, and in advertising to promote literacy instruction. Libraries have established themselves as the first place that many people turn for literacy instruction.

The Literacy Assistance Center maintains an information and referral hotline for anyone interested in adult literacy services. The service, staffed by multilingual referral specialists, referred over 10,000 callers in 1991-92. A follow-up study indicated that nearly 60% of the prospective students who called the LAC hotline were enrolled, wait listed or had completed a NYCALI instructional program.

"There are over 2,000 people on the waiting list for classes. Prospective students have to wait upwards of 2 years between the time they place their names on the list and the time we call them in for assessment. If the particular level and time slot they need is unavailable, they may have to spend an additional year on holding lists."

(NYCALI Program Director)

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

In the Final Reports completed by all NYCALI literacy programs, administrators and practitioners indicated many common problems and suggested solutions that could improve the quality of their services.

A near universal issue is funding. Many agencies are struggling to maintain their services. Although the quality of programs has been maintained, agencies have been forced to reduce staff while sustaining their enrollment levels.

Nearly all agencies reported on the tremendous learner demand; many have waiting lists running into the hundreds and in some cases thousands of individuals. For many programs the number of people seeking literacy services markedly increased in recent years. The overwhelming majority of students on NYCALI waiting lists are not eligible for free services through any other programs which indicates the magnitude of the need for increasing program support. Many administrators are frustrated with their inability to serve all who apply. The number of students on waiting lists remains a critical concern throughout the literacy community.

A partial solution to the financial needs of NYCALI programs would be the provision of assistance in finding alternative sources of funding. Many small programs do not have the staff to seek out funding institutions and write proposals needed to compete for available grants. A central service providing grant advice would be very beneficial given the present funding environment.

A fundamental issue that many programs request help with is providing or finding services for students with special needs. This includes students with learning disabilities or other disabilities, students who need family counseling or other forms of crisis intervention, students with health problems and a variety of social and legal needs. The recognition of learning disabilities alone is a significant issue for many programs. NYCALI staff have recommended that additional staff development and extensive referral services be made available.

Many agency staff indicated the need for specific information about other programs. Many practitioners expressed the need for a comprehensive handbook of program offerings, including kinds of classes, schedules, enrollment times, limitations on who can enroll, specific services provided, length of waiting list, educational methodology, location and a synopsis of special programs that would allow agencies to refer students to other programs that would best meet their specific needs. While the Literacy Assistance Center produces and makes available a directory of literacy programs, and has a comprehensive referral data base available through the hotline, all practitioners are not aware of these services. The difficulty in getting up-to-date information on openings and waiting lists remains a concern of all support and provider agencies.

CHALLENGES AND EXPECTATIONS CONFRONTING LITERACY

"We hope that the funders and policy makers will become aware of the conditions which caused the riots in May, 1992 in South Central Los Angeles. The same conditions exist in all oppressed, urban environments where the adults and youth are unemployed, underemployed and lacking sufficient education to compete effectively to transcend their hopeless realities. More resources need to be channeled into adult education efforts in order to ameliorate some of the conditions which plague our inner cities."

(NYCALI PROGRAM DIRECTOR)

The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative continues to provide a wide range of instructional services to tens of thousands of New Yorkers. The ongoing effectiveness of NYCALI is maintained during a period of fundamental change and challenge to the adult literacy community in New York.

Recent years have seen a vast new immigration to New York City, during a continuing period of intense economic recession which effects both program funding and the job market. Policy makers, administrators and students have called for greater emphasis on preparation for employment, and at the same time new immigrants and many native New Yorkers in communities devastated by cuts in social services need a broad range of literacy and other skills and services to survive successfully in New York City. The result has been a rapid increase in the demand for literacy services, with program waiting lists reaching into the thousands. Simultaneously, there has been a fundamental change in the organization of adult literacy services in New York City, as Federal and State legislation has created new funding sources and mandated a move towards standardized measures of program achievement. NYCALI has responded to these challenges by incorporating new curricular approaches, expanding staff development and moving towards procedures for assessment of student progress and program effectiveness which are both sensitive to the various ways in which students learn and succeed, and which meet the requirements of diverse funders.

Throughout NYCALI program directors report frustration in not being able to serve all who seek literacy instruction. Many NYCALI programs have extensive waiting lists for classes. Driven by economic, cultural, and self-development needs, students come to NYCALI programs because of the success found there by friends and neighbors, and the effectiveness of the LAC hotline and other referral and outreach systems. The result is that waiting lists for services at some programs are one to several years long. Often adults seeking NYCALI services become frustrated and never enter programs. For those who are in programs, retention policies and support efforts have been established throughout the Initiative. Yet, despite these efforts, tens of thousands of New Yorkers are not receiving the literacy services they seek.

A prime need of NYCALI students is preparation

for employment or further education for those already in the workplace. Many NYCALI programs are involved in ongoing development and delivery of instruction that can prepare students for better employment opportunities. In addition, many programs are now serving immigrant populations that require both job preparation and a wide range of services to help them adjust to a new society. At the same time, initiative programs continue to expand the battery of instructional modalities, including computer-assisted instruction, multicultural curricula, family literacy and other contextualized approaches. All these trends require increasing elaboration and availability of staff development programs.

During the last few years State and Federal funds have been directed into other, non-NYCALI programs, such as BEGIN and EDGE, which are part of the City's welfare reform efforts for serving public assistance recipients. Some of these programs emphasize models of service delivery different from those found in NYCALI. The result of these recent funding changes is that many literacy providing agencies now receive funds from several sources, with dissimilar implementation and reporting guidelines. Having diverse sources of funding to service specialized populations encourages programs to expand their offerings and examine their instructional approach. The challenge now facing individual programs and the literacy community in general is how to further coordinate this increasingly complex array of services.

The requirement of standardized assessment of student progress and diverse reporting formats are complicated by the educational trend toward authentic or alternative assessment approaches. Many programs have expanded the use of non-standardized alternative assessment procedures, which are more sensitive to the contextualized achievements of a diverse population receiving varied educational services than the TABE, John, Fred or NYS Place tests. The NYCALI community, which uses computer-based student data reporting systems, is committed to exploring assessment approaches and reporting criteria which can accommodate these divergent trends.

A final challenge to NYCALI is the reduction and shifting of program funding. The immediate effect for NYCALI is a slight reduction in the number of students served. Only some of the students who previously would have been served by NYCALI are eligible for the recently established programs. Despite reduced New York City funding, NYCALI programs have effectively maintained the diversity and quality of services and have continued the development of new and innovative approaches. While NYCALI served fewer students this year than last, and had to reduce staff size, instructional and contact hours per student were either maintained at last year's level or showed an increase, indicating the commitment to providing the services required by students.

The organization of adult literacy services in New York is becoming increasingly complex, and

new and more complicated demands are being made on the NYCALI system. Newly-focused funding will encourage some programs to serve exclusively certain portions of the student population. The increasing diversity of services and a growing multicultural population will require expanded staff development and program support. The implementation of alternative assessment approaches within the context of a Statewide move towards standard measures of program success will require research and significant policy decisions. And the inability of programs to serve all students in a timely manner will put increasing stress on NYCALI staff and services. These are the primary challenges confronting NYCALI programs in the near future.

"We're impatient, frustrated and sometimes down on ourselves. We should be more confident but we're not, we've been kicked about so much we've become discouraged. But we will make it, yes we will, because we're strong and we help ourselves. We just keep getting up each time we get kicked down, so we're living proof that there's hope."

(NYCALI BE STUDENT)

APPENDIX

New York City Adult Literacy Initiative programs submit annual reports to New York City and State. The figures from these documents, and the program descriptions they contain, provided the basis for this annual account.

Data collection and processing of information on NYCALI programs and students are accomplished through use of a computerized management information system. The City University of New York, community-based organizations, selected regions of the New York City Public Schools and the New York Public Library utilize the ALIES (Adult Literacy Information and Evaluation System) micro computer system, while the remaining regions of the New York City Public School Adult and Continuing Education program use a central mainframe system compatible with ALIES. Figures quoted in this report reflect students and services in these programs.

The Brooklyn Public Library and the Queens Borough Public Library currently use a different record-keeping and reporting system.[17] Wherever possible, data from their programs are included in the charts in this report. Footnotes indicate when the different program and reporting standards affect this approach.

In addition to providing official final reports for submission to funders, data from the ALIES and New York City Public Schools computer systems are combined and edited to produce the New York City Adult Literacy data base. This data base is analyzed to provide a demographic profile of adult learners and to address issues important to practitioners, funders and policy makers. Additional information on data base analyses may be obtained through the Literacy Assistance Center.

17 Beginning in the 1992-93 program year, the Brooklyn Public Library will begin to use the ALIES system.

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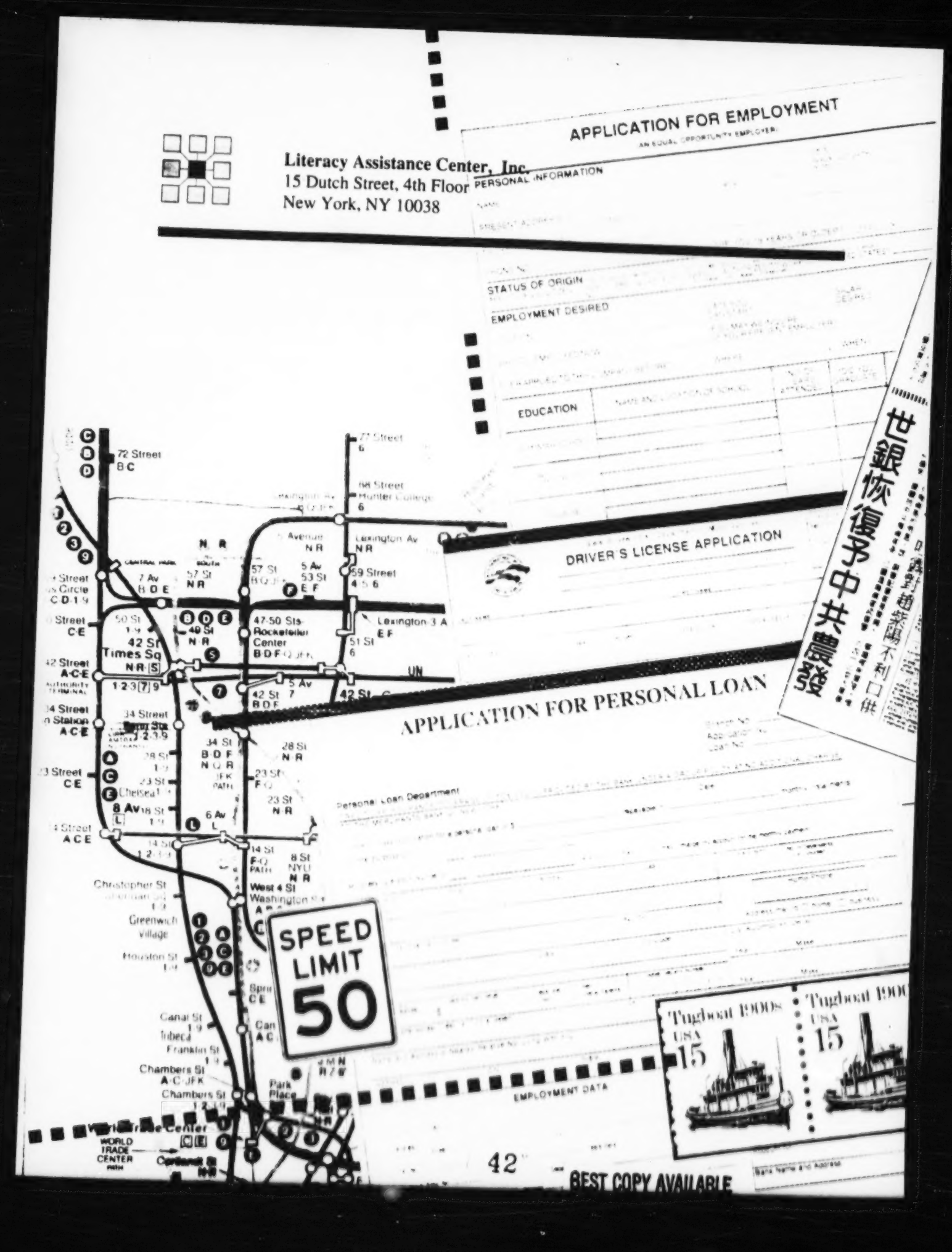

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